Old Persian Carpets

and their Aesthetic Value

A Study by Carl Hopf

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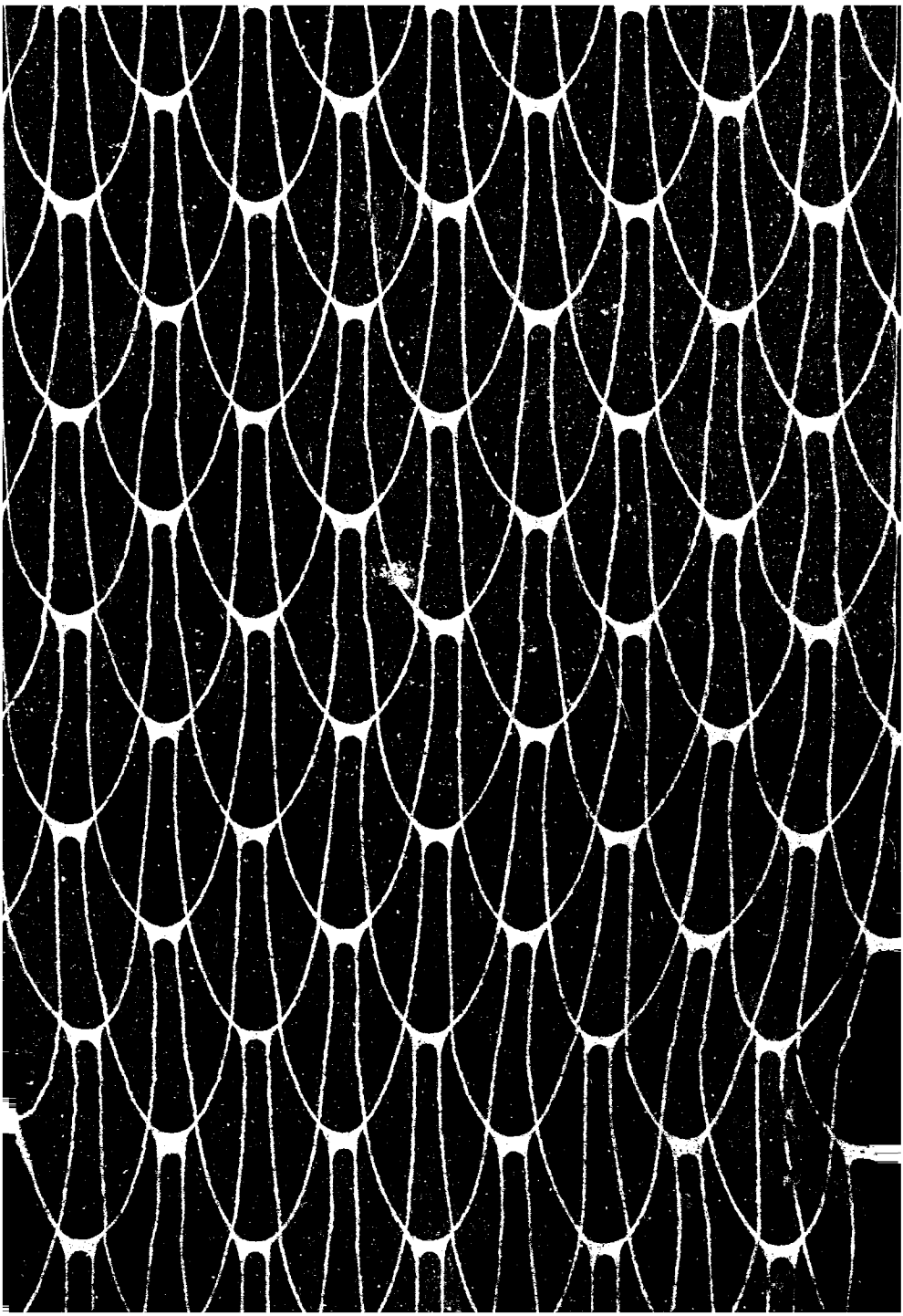

Plate 1.

Old Chinese or Tibetian brocade.

Old Persian Carpets

and their Artistic Values

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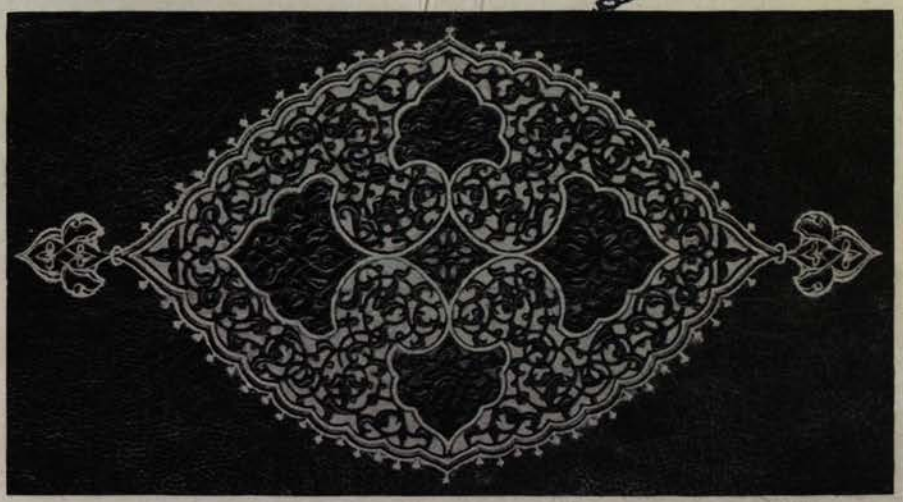

A Study by

Carl Hopf

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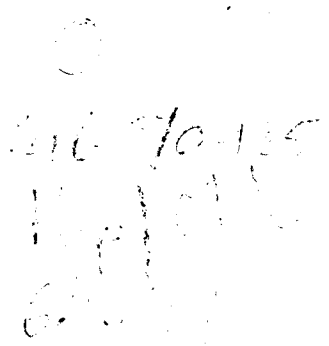

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Ill. 1. *Border of an old Persian carpet, 16th century.*

General Valuation.

In the last few years love for Oriental carpets has grown to such an extent that the greatest expectations have been surpassed. Owing to increased and wide-spread prosperity of large classes a strong desire for refinement in the conditions of living is opening up unforeseen possibilities of development. All questions regarding the furnishing of our living rooms are treated with laudable seriousness, and, after going astray a few times, the right way seems to have been found for satisfying a natural craving for beauty.

Might not the enormous increase in the Sale of Oriental carpets during the last few years be a sign of this movement?

The love of colour is returning and the many-hued child of the East is no longer despised for his brightness, but welcomed for the harmony and charm of his tints. The thirsting sense of color drinks them in with delight.

The Oriental carpet! What has not been preached against it these past 15 years!

The design, they say, is too petty, too full, and too detailed, and gives an

Ill. 2. *Margin of an old Persian manuscript. Date 1435.*

unquiet effect. It is better adapted to the Oriental, who squats on the floor, than to the European, who sees it from a height and who therefore only appreciates and requires large patterns. The colours are too loud. The carpet were best without any design; a smooth "quiet" surface without the disturbing colour scheme.

Thus a song not only without words but also without sound!

"So you want me to make the colours of the carpet drab and dead?" asked the Persian in Sultanabad when the first order for a phantom carpet of this kind was being given.

"Certainly, by preference gray", answered the European.

"And there must be no design?"

"Just so, none, or hardly any."

"Hm, hm — have you no faith in me, do you not believe that I can draw a beautiful design?"

"Oh, I know very well that you can do it; you have proved it often enough, but the occidentals like emptiness nowadays; therefore attend to my wish."

The old man in the long caftan drew himself up slowly, shook his head, and refused the order.

It was asking too much. The Oriental will never understand that emptiness and dullness are preferable to the wealth of rhythmical design, to the fullness of harmonious colouring. His natural artistic instinct guards him from following wrong paths, and we may be glad of this for in view of the unrest and the fluctuations of the fashion currents in Western lands, we are badly in need of a pillar of good taste founded on the rock of tradition.

Or is the Oriental in the wrong? Is our valuation of his carpets founded on a fanciful notion or a misconception of the human need for ornament?

If the present day had to decide this question one might rightly object that our sense of the artistic is much too unsettled to pronounce an unbiased judgment. But fortunately, former and better times have spoken in this matter.

For centuries the textile arts of the East played an exceedingly impor-

Ill. 3. *Buchara, about 1400.*

tant part in Europe. Nothing can be more significant of the high place assigned to them than the fact that they were an essential means of enhancing pomp and splendor in palaces and churches during the great period of art at the end of the Middle Ages.

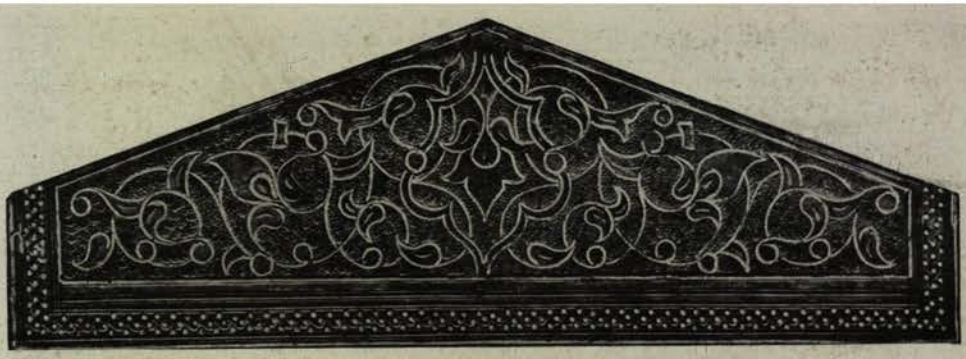
We have the most reliable proof for this in the paintings of such celebrated masters of the time as Holbein, van Eyck, Raphael, Rubens, and many others; and we know that their profound knowledge of colouring was to a great extent animated by and founded upon the study of Oriental weavings.

Eastern stuffs and rugs, which were already at that time important articles of trade between Europe and Asia, were also to be found in thousands in the houses of well-to-do and art-loving commoners, where they were highly prized. On hundreds of old pictures which depict their life and doings these tapestries are copied; and often they are painted with such exactness that it would not be difficult to have them reproduced on a present day loom by the deft hands of Oriental weaving-girls.

This marked regard for Oriental carpets during highly artistic epochs goes to show that they must have a certain intrinsical aesthetic value, a certain classical importance.

Their appreciation could be dimmed by changes in the public taste, as in the time of the Rococo, but could never be obliterated. It had taken too great a hold on the masses of the people, and like the Sleeping Beauty it could be awakened again and again to new life when the desire for gay colours broke the spell.

Even to-day the people's estimation of Persian carpets almost borders on veneration. Wherever an ensemble of sumptuousness and beauty is aimed at the Persian carpet is present. That all of them, especially the old ones, harmonize with everything, and with every mood, and do justice even to the most distinguished surroundings has never ceased to be an undisputed truth. I mention this fact, though I do not altogether subscribe to it, for I believe it can only be said of those works of this art which have not only all the advan-



Ill. 4. *Egyptian, 15th century.*

tages of an evenly balanced polychromy, but in general also rest on the approved tradition of centuries.

Besides, the East offers such unlimited variety and choice of technique and design in its carpets that to obey literally such a vague saying and to dispense with careful selection for each special case, would, of course, be foolish.

Carpets with every conceivable effect in numberless gradations are at our disposal: From the noble seriousness of the Turcoman carpets to the exultant freshness of the products of Kurdistan; from the rich polychromy of West-Persian products to the prayer rugs of Asia Minor, with their very distinguished harmony especially tuned to one dominating colour.

Ill. 5. *Border of the "Viennese Hunting Carpet", 16th century.*

The Design.

On what now does this preeminence and this renowned charm depend? The foundation is of course a good, suitable design. In the service of pomp-loving princes the genius of the Oriental achieved the highest place ever reached in the decoration of surfaces; also for more modest work it created an almost countless number of well styled designs.

When Persian art awoke to new life at the commencement of the Safawid dynasty (1502—1629) it found ready for disposal the ancient Persian traditions with their vast treasure of matured forms (ills. 2, 3, 4, 49 and titlepage). Their origin is difficult to prove. I may be permitted to mention here that the longer I study the matter, the more I am inclined to consider the world of Chinese culture or one derived from it, to have been the chief influence on the whole ancient world of art in both Central and Southern Asia.

At any rate at a much earlier time than the one we are concerned with, Chinese thoughts must have invaded the old Persian decorative art, since the wide diffusion of a purely Chinese device would otherwise be inexplicable. I mean the so-called cloudband, this infinitely elastic mollusk-like form, which in uncounted variations has intruded everywhere and sometimes with the greatest importunity (ill. 9).

Only about the year 1500 the far-eastern influence seems to have pervaded all the art of Persia. At first it was beneficial with regard to Persian surface designs, later on when the Chinese art-forms brought no longer ornamental constituents or at least no devices adapted to rhythmical transformation, this influence began to prove disastrous.

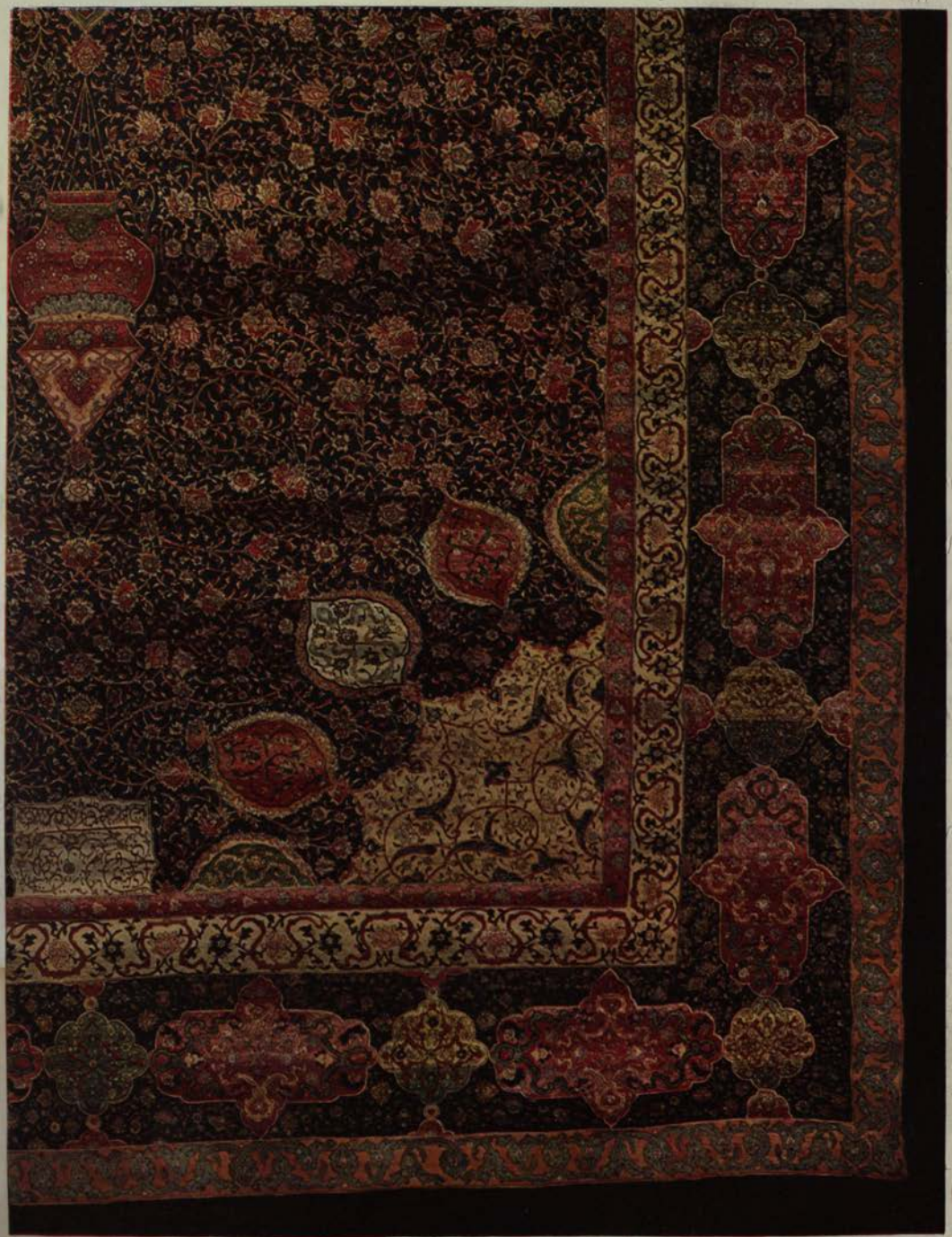
Ill. 6. *Portrait of a Persian, 15th century.*

Ill. 7. *Portrait of a Persian lady, presum. end of the 15th century.*

From the Chinese miniature painting came a flood of purely pictorial conceptions, scenes of all kinds, which were willingly adopted by Persian art. This influence of a high character in itself, led to the portrayal of human and animal figures in repose and even action in weavings intended for the floor. Also from the treasure house of Chinese symbolism many figures were taken such as the dragon, phoenix, the kilin, the tschi etc. etc.

These strange forms were regarded as superior to all others. They where given the most conspicuous places while the old ornaments so noble in style are reduced to a mere frame-work.

Thus two worlds, each with its own matured art meet here — the one decorative, pure ornament in the abstract and the other devoted to the pictorial representations of saints, myths, historical events, or of symbolism. It is most interesting to see the two together and to observe how they fuse; and how at last the old Persian style of designs, which is better adapted to the structure of weaving, as well as to the use to which the



Celebrated carpet from Ardebil

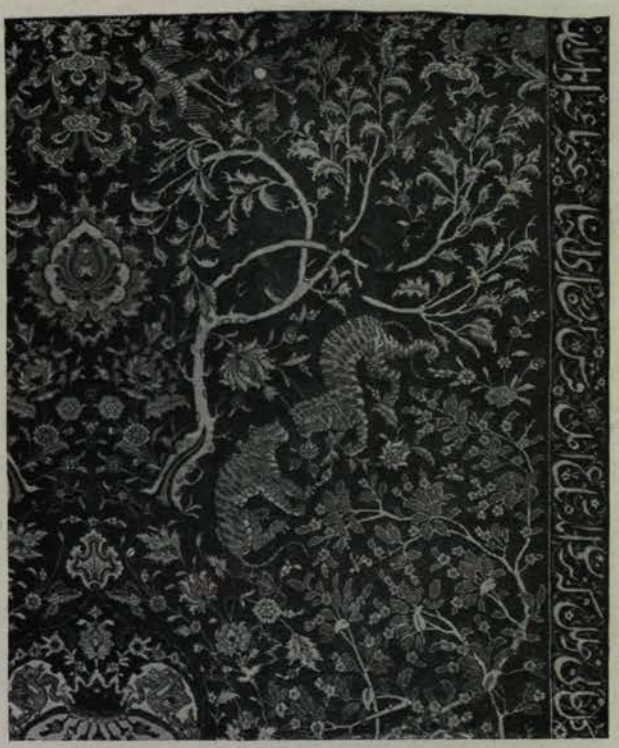
N.W. Persia. Date 1539. Now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

carpets are put, wins the day and either casts out the foreign element or remodels it to its own nature.

We may see all this described in the illustrations contained in this little work.

On Plate II we see a section of a carpet whose extremely rich design still rests on old Persian tradition though already strongly influenced by the taste of the far East. The flowery ornaments show the gorgeous luxuriance and natural freshness of Chinese plant patterns, and in the light frieze of the border the afore mentioned cloud-band may be observed. We find it again in the long red-grounded panels on the border of this carpet. Here however, the two fluttering ends are joined and closed as if by a clasp or a knot (see also ill. 1).

Thus closed, this Chinese device is to be seen in countless variations throughout the ornamental art of the East, — a subject into which, infortunately, I cannot enter here.



Ill. 8. *Persia. 16th century.*

Ill. 9. *Persia, 16th century.*

Ill. 10. From an old Persian M.S. Date 1531.

From about 1500 A. D. when this carpet was woven in Kashan, N. W. Persia, date many other pieces of work of the greatest loveliness and charm. Without doubt they are among the most beautiful objects which the decorative art of any nation has ever produced. We are enraptured by the vivid invention displayed and the ingenious blending of the many and varied means at disposal. The delicate manner in which the drawing is distributed over the surface, the superior and almost wanton skill with which all details are carried out show such artistic pre-eminence that we are filled with wonder.

As another splendid example of this epoch a beautiful margin from a Persian manuscript is shown on ill. 10. Tender vines with leaves and blossoms seem to grow in exquisite curves from a corner in which gayly plumed birds are rocking themselves in the sunshine.

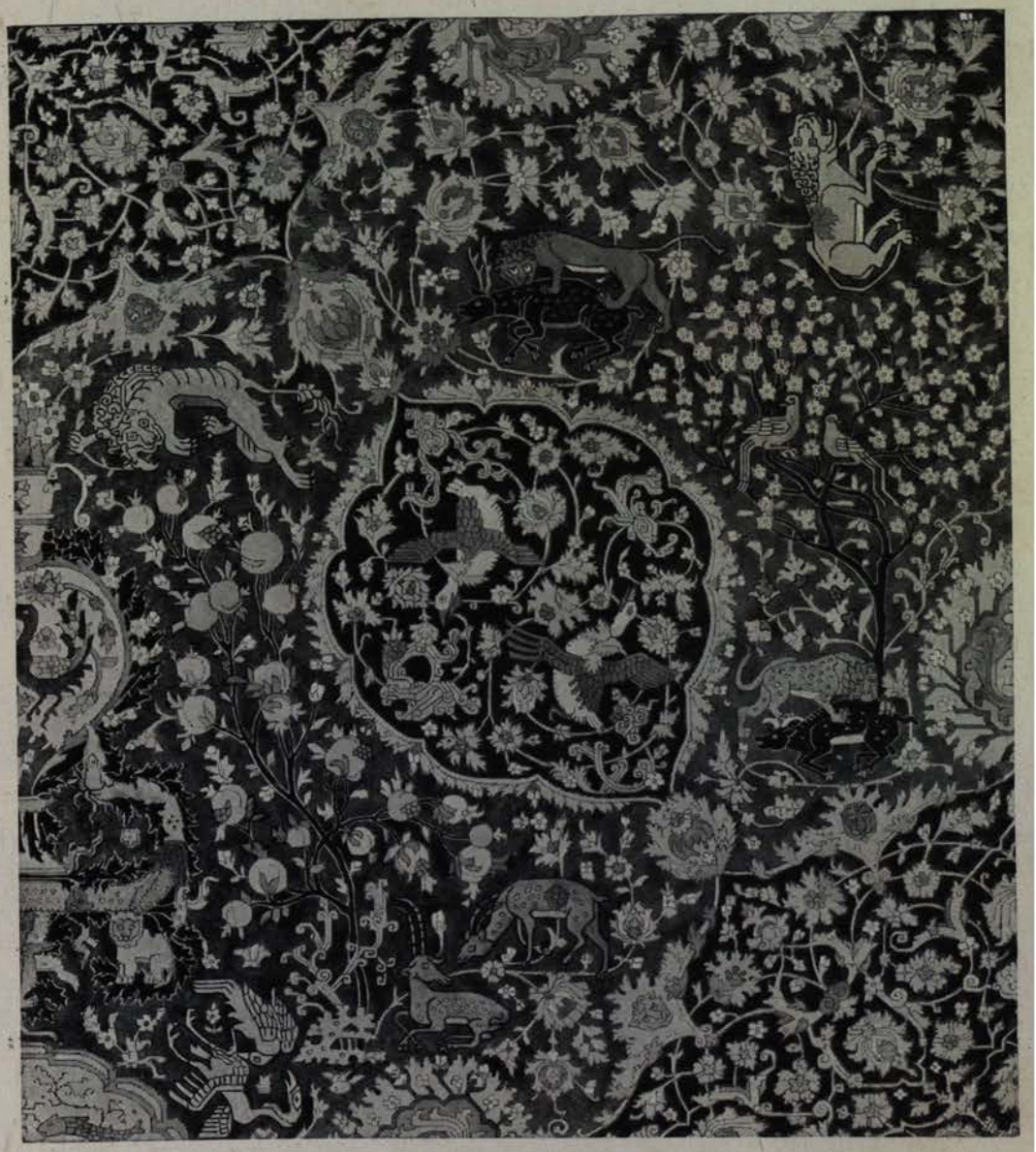
With a bold brush the very talented artist has sketched out his idea, and in the merry play of his imagination composed a song of the most subtle charm and vivaciousness.

What schooling of taste must have gone before, till a generation could produce and could appreciate such a high standard of art! Only an ascent lasting through hundreds perhaps thousands of years could lead to the exalted heights, whose glory we see reflected in these productions. A reflection only, for, as we know, the Persian art of this period could not have reached such a high stage of development and florescence without the impulse of older and finer traditions.

The silk hunting carpet, Plate III, dates from a rather later time in which the influence of Eastern Asia had gained complete ascendency. For instance it is obvious that the winged genii of ill. 5 have the same origin of conception as the similar figures supposed to be alighting from the clouds in

Silk carpet from N.W. Persia

16th Cent. In posession of the Imp. Court of Vienna.

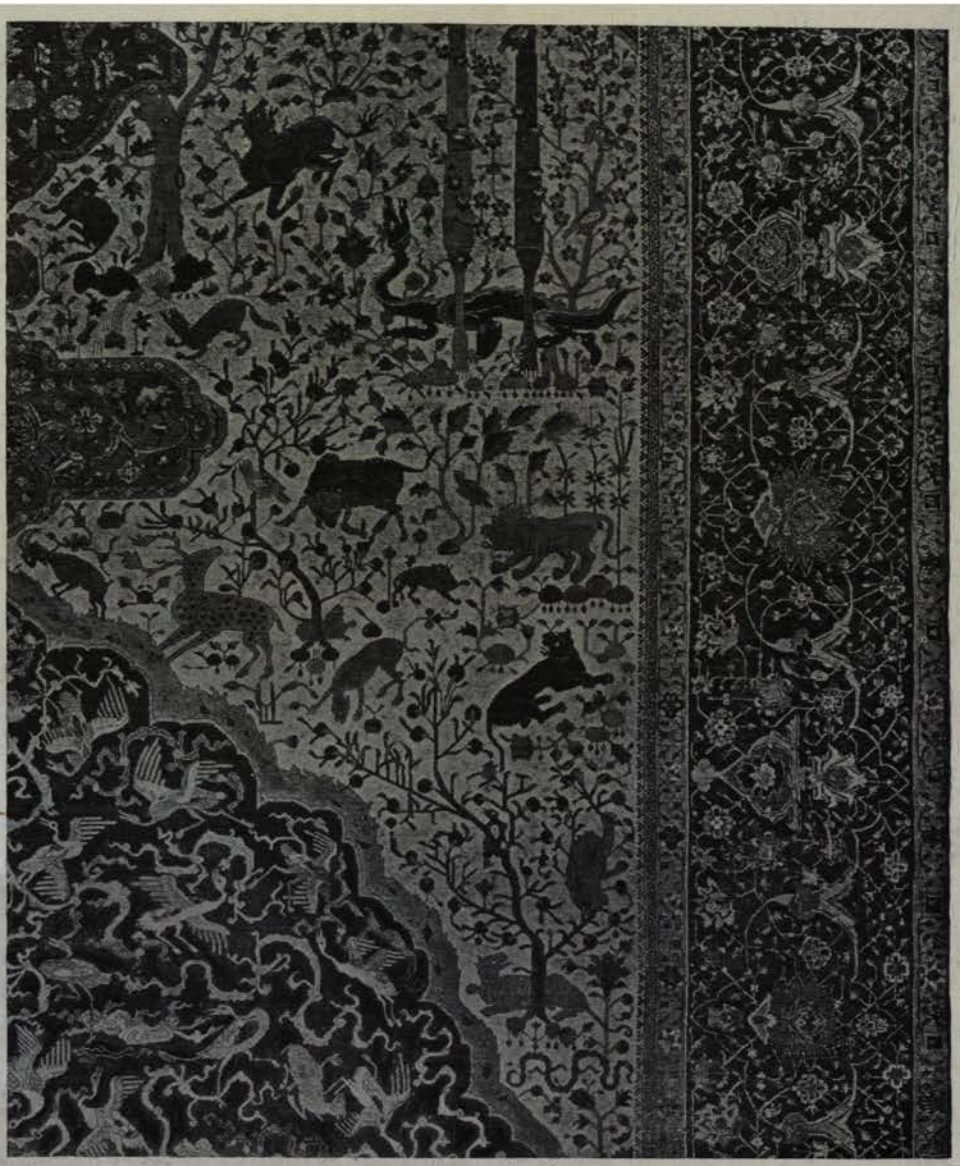


Ill. 11. *Persia, 16th century.*

the very good picture of a Chinese embroidery, placed for convenient comparison at the beginning of this little treatise.

On p. 3 we may see the border, on p. 11 a section from the centre of another carpet which is rightly considered to be one of the finest productions of Persia. It is probably also from Kashan.

No other can show more gracefully the coëxistence of two different schools of art. Two diagonally opposed corners show a rhythm of design in the style of the arabesque. The obliquely placed medallion in the centre with its leaflike outline on one side, and the smooth line on the other contains



Ill. 12. *Persia, end of 16th century.*

purely Chinese decorations: fluttering ducks and the tschi, whose prototype is to be found at the top of the brocade in Plate I., connected with conventional flowers on old Persian vines. All the rest of the surface is completely given over to Chinese influence: flowery trees with birds, fighting and grazing animals etc. In the border (ill. 1) most gracefully interwoven with the finely drawn scroll-work we find the two fabled animals already referred to, the dragon and the phoenix, and also representations of fighting animals. The whole is an admirable piece of drawing, replete with richness, boldness, and noble rhythm.

The carpet from N.W. Persia (ill. 12), probably knotted at a much later

date, can also be mentioned here. Its language is very plain:

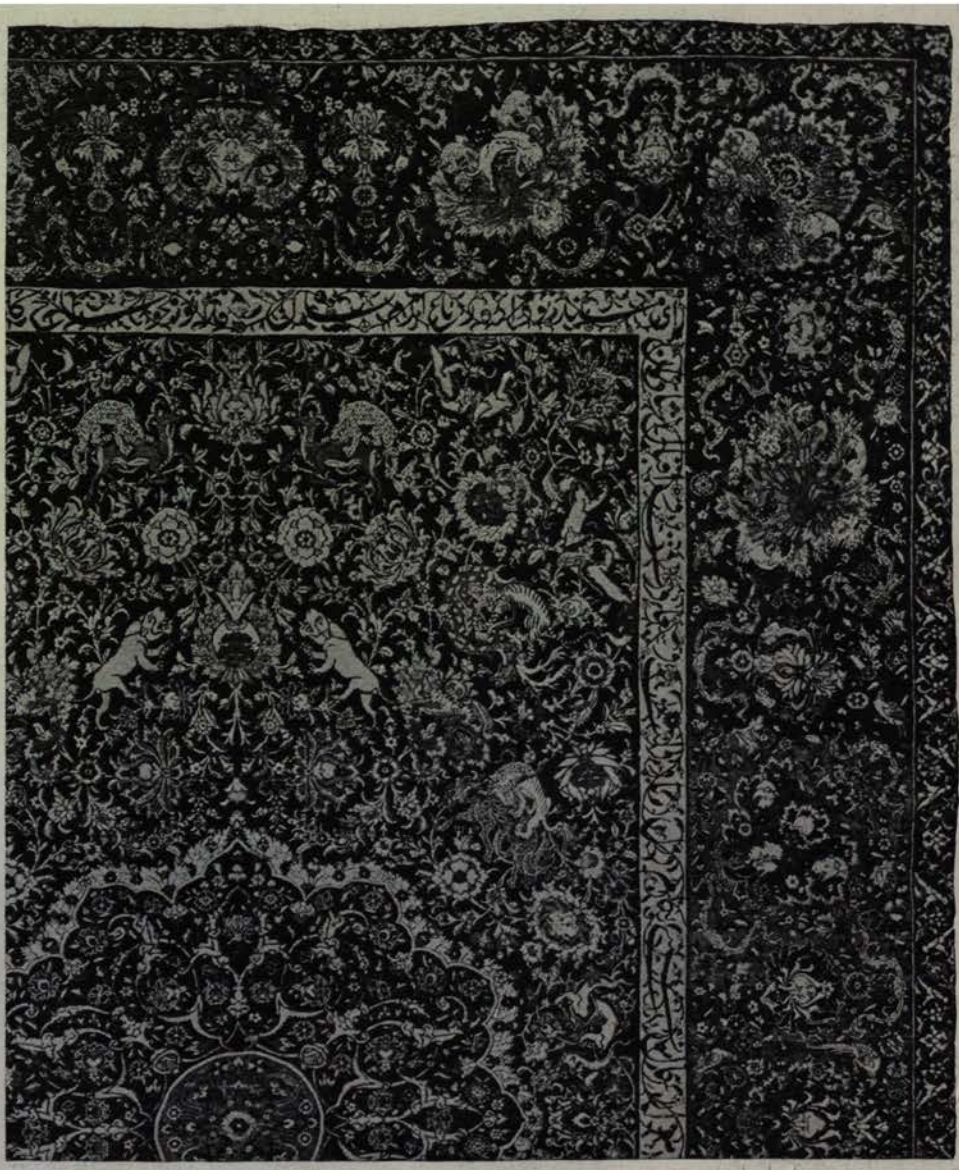
The large white centrepiece is drawn entirely in the style of Persian-Chinese miniatures, and the large star shows a very medley of purely Chinese forms. In strong contrast to this the border and two projections of the star bear the character of an abstract, finely conventional ornamentation such as was formerly at home and predominant in Persia, and which, as I have remarked before, was dislodged by the new influence. Had this carpet been knotted 100 years earlier this latter style would probably have predominated and would alone have given form and life to the carpet.

Probably already towards the end of the 16th, certainly in the 17th century, a turning away from the well-known pictorial subjects took place in Persian weaving and thus brought about a return to the more reasonable schematic arrangement of Oriental surface designs.

The clash of antagonistic elements brought forth at first such an

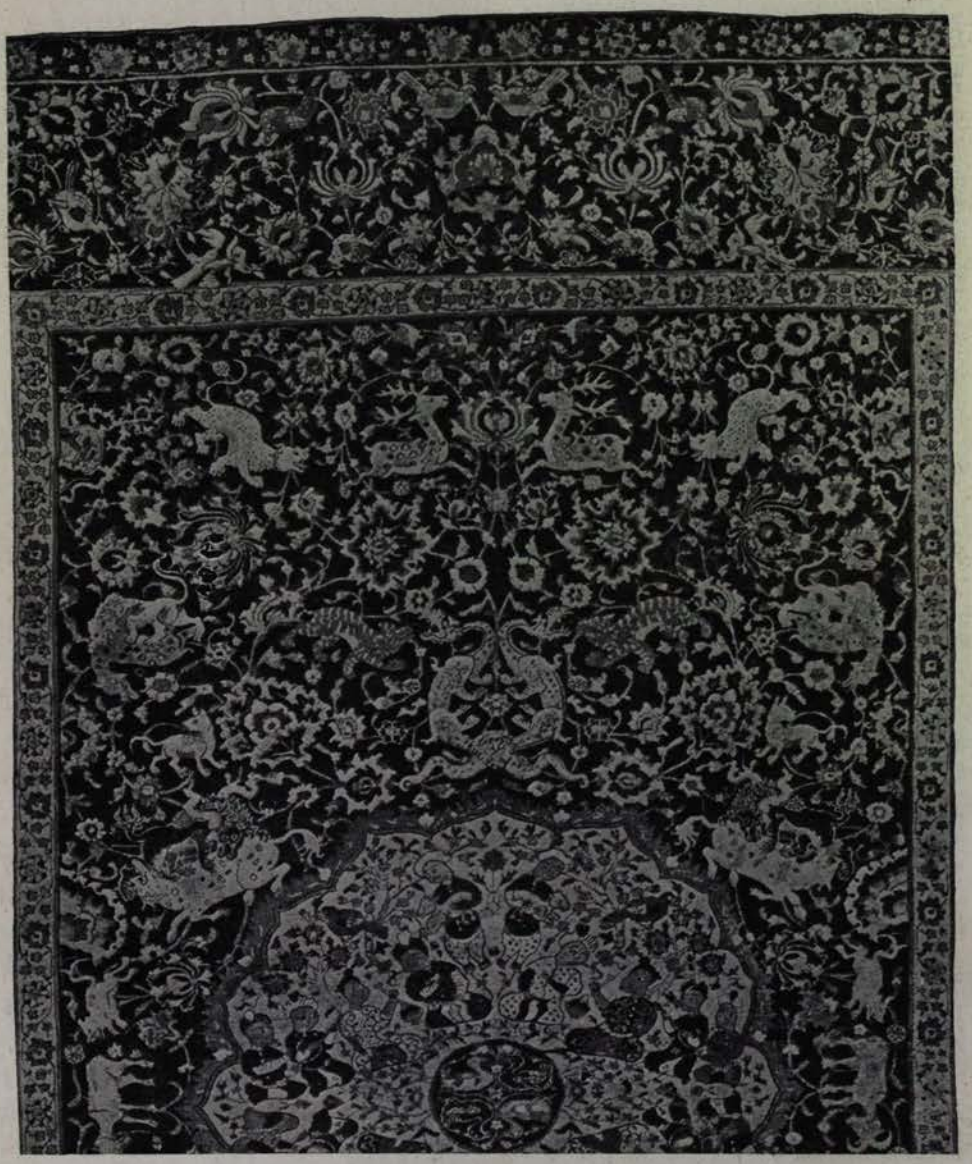
Ill. 13. *Persia, 16th century.*

Ill. 14. *Persia, about 1600.*



Ill. 15. *Persia, 16th century.*

exuberance of life, such powerful boldness of forming thoughts, that patterns were produced as if the whole mass of motives had been spun around in a cylinder and then fixed into ornaments by the sudden spell of a magician. (ill. 15). On the carpet of Ill. 15 we see a whirling flood of flowers, leaves, and animals; everywhere the grinning heads of wolves, bears etc. Here two fighting beasts are twirling as if caught in a eddy, and yonder among magnificent blooming flowers monkeys are at play. A perfect revel of the artists mind, an amazing ability! (see also ill. 50). We are carried away with admiration and are involuntarily reminded of our age of Baroque, which also could not have enough twists and turns and odd creations. Can, how-



Ill. 16. *Persia, 16th century.*

ever, even its highest achievements rival in wealth of imagination and wanton art such works as these?

However the foaming wine fermented as we can see by the following series of our non-coloured illustrations. Gravity, clearness, and simplicity are engendered.

We see the unruly invaders forced into the rhythm of schematic design (ill. 17—35). Pleasant gardens, alive with animals, and the freely woven garlands must accomodate themselves to conventional patterns in which the large peony-like figures state the scheme of the design (ill. 21, 22). Soon these forms, namely the blossoming vines, adopt the character of modest

Ill. 17. *Beginning of 17th century.*

Ill. 18. *Persia, 17th century.*

and well reserved beings (ill. 18, 21, 22 a. f.), till gradually the increasing impoverishment of the designs makes them (ill. 23, 24, 27) shrivel up and finally disappear altogether; as the scenic material with human figures did from the very first.

The animal world too is not spared. It is almost comical to find those who once enjoyed the sunniest freedom now the wretched prisoners of the scheme and locked up in narrow cells (ill. 17, 19, 30). They too experience the same fate of increasing decay and final extinction (ill. 33, 34, 35). It is not unusual that these animal-shapes are gradually converted into ornaments of an extremely abstract nature. In fact, were we not in a position to trace their connexion by help of the products of the various periods of transformation, we would be unable to discern their origin.

Out of this process of fusion and transformation Oriental decorative art grew again to a glorious period of

florescence. It was just this period which gave the weavers the untold wealth of patterns of classic beauty which for centuries astonished and delighted the people of the West and still rouse our glowing admiration.

By the power of their creative genius and with the assurance of a highly cultivated taste founded on ancient tradition, the Persians created a vast profuseness of designs out of what we saw were two diametrically opposed schools of art. For centuries, later generations, not only in Persia, have lived on this supply without exhausting it.

All the thousands of devices were created by changes on a descending scale. Nowhere in the wide sweep of this descent do we see even the slightest appearance of an attempt to ascend. Parallel with the general decay of political and economical power of the East its art also deteriorated, but not without leaving fruits of lasting worth on each of its many stages downwards.

Nothing could prove better the imposing grandeur of tradition than this remarkable fact, and there is no more brilliant testimony to the inherent skill of the Oriental.

In proof of this statement, I wish to describe more in detail one of the illustrations which represent this special class (ill. 20). It shows a "repeating pattern", taken from the old Feraghan carpet on Plate VI, to which I will refer again later on. This pattern was with others for a period of perhaps 150 years the common property of nearly all the Persian carpet weaving trade. It was handed down from generation to generation into our own day and has undergone countless changes at the hands of many thousands of weavers.

Ill. 19. From a Persian M.S. Date 1531.

Ill. 20. *Part of a Feraghan carpet, about 1800.*

Here an upright lozenge contains a conventionalized rose surrounded by smaller flowers. In the angles of the lozenge there are four large flowers growing and between them the artist has placed certain leaf-like figures. The remaining space he has filled in with different sized flowers that seem to grow out of the larger ones. This is in the main what is meant by "repeating pattern". The interstices formed by its repetitions are filled in with rosettes and small flowers.

In the carpet trade this pattern is known as the "Herati". It is supposed to have originated in Herat, in the Afghanistan of to-day.

The interested reader may like to compare the various forms of this pattern on Plate V (upper and lower picture) and VI as well as on

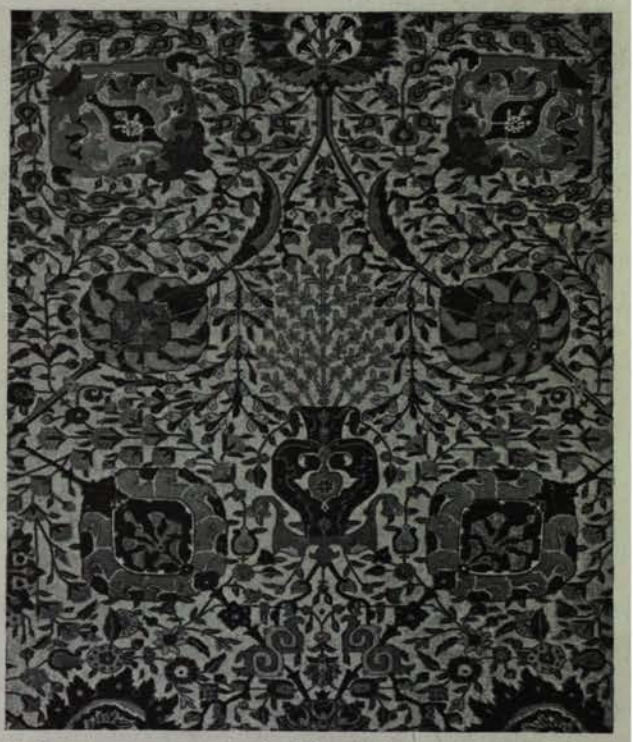
illustrations Nos. 46, 47, and 48. He will note their different constructions and at the same time observe that they retained the peculiarities of the "Herati"; above all, their incomparable appropriateness for serving as fields for harmonious colouring.

Thus we have arrived at a point from where we may get a glimpse of the following chapter on colour.

All the many remarkable patterns of the later period of Persian textile art (ill. 36, 41—48) seem to have been created for the purpose of obtaining the colour effects which will occupy us later on; their ingenious interweavings, their well-distributed and nicely styled designs are very well adapted to this.

From the happy union of such elements sprang the aesthetic charm which won the universal admiration of western countries and led to the very firmly grounded understanding of the artistic nature of Oriental carpets.

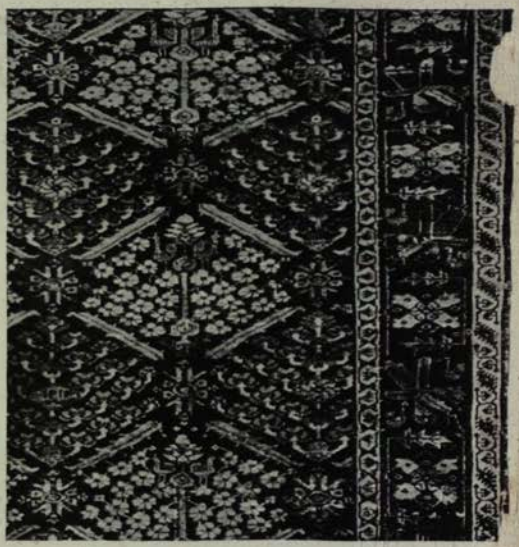
Here we are strongly impressed by the fact that these simpler carpets, rather than the more richly-patterned ones, are



Ill. 21. *Persia, 17th century.*

Ill. 22. *Persia, 18th century.*

Ill. 23. *Persia, end of 18th century.*



Ill. 25. *N.W. Persia. Date 1795.*

Ill. 26. *S. Caucasus, about 1800.*

Ill. 24. *Persia, end of 18th century.*

Ill. 27. *S. Caucasus, beginning of 19th cent.*

Upper ill.: Kaschkai carpet, S. W. Persia.
Lower ill.: Daghestan carpet, S. Caucasus.

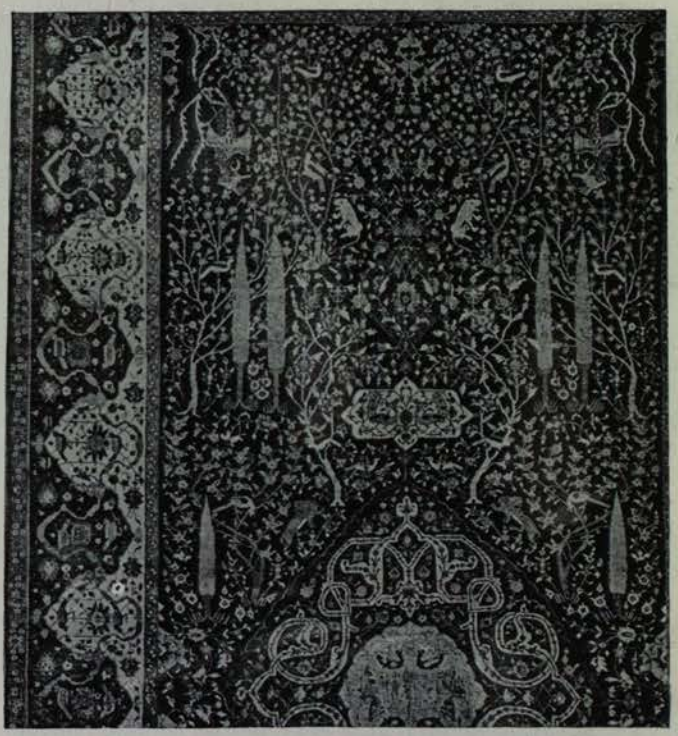
creations of lasting worth, are solutions which needed to be found but once in order to serve mankind for ever as an enrichment of its store of classic art.

We need not be surprised to learn that it was the Persians above all that attained this rare perfection. We should only recall that they showed their extraordinary gift for rhythmical beauty in other departments as well.

Orientalists that have entered into the spirit of the old Persian poets praise with enthusiasm their delicate sense of propriety and the immense wealth of form again displayed here.

Dr. Horn, Professor of Eastern Languages, in his book entitled "History of Persian Literature" speaks of it as follows:

"The natural talent of the Persians soon caused them to outstrip their Arabian examples. They adopted the poetical style and soon mastered it with the most perfect



Ill. 28. *Persia, 16th century.*

Ill. 29. *Persia, end of 18th century.*

Ill. 30. *Margin from a Persian manuscript. Date 1531.*

ease. Their power to absorb foreign elements successfully and to give them an appearance, in the end, of being Persian in character was also exercised in poetry. Here they animated all the foreign forms and gave them a vitality which their originators could never have put into them. Thus the Persians soon became the undisputed masters of poetry in the world of Islam."

In the working out of this chapter I have endeavoured to discribe the matter as shortly as I could and to connect the illustrations with the text so as to try the reader's patience as little as possible.

In view of this and the small compass of my book, of course, I have had to sacrifice much, for instance an account of the two important groups of carpets from Asia Minor and Turkestan, the spirit of whose older ornamental art is undoubtedly connected with that of Persia.

In a larger work, which will contain more than 100 coloured Plates and many illustrations I shall endeavour to satisfy wider claims. It has been in preparation for years and will be issued by the same publishers during the course of the next two years in the best form possible.

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Ill. 31. *Fragment of a Carpet from Herat, 17th century.*

The Colour.

As melodious sounds, so beautiful colours appeal immediately to the heart, and when they appear in rich and noble harmony they touch our inmost soul. This property has always been attributed to good Oriental carpets. The art lover can be rapturously enthusiastic on this point. He speaks of the everchanging charm of their colour, of their bloom and lustre, strength and depth, as of a miracle.

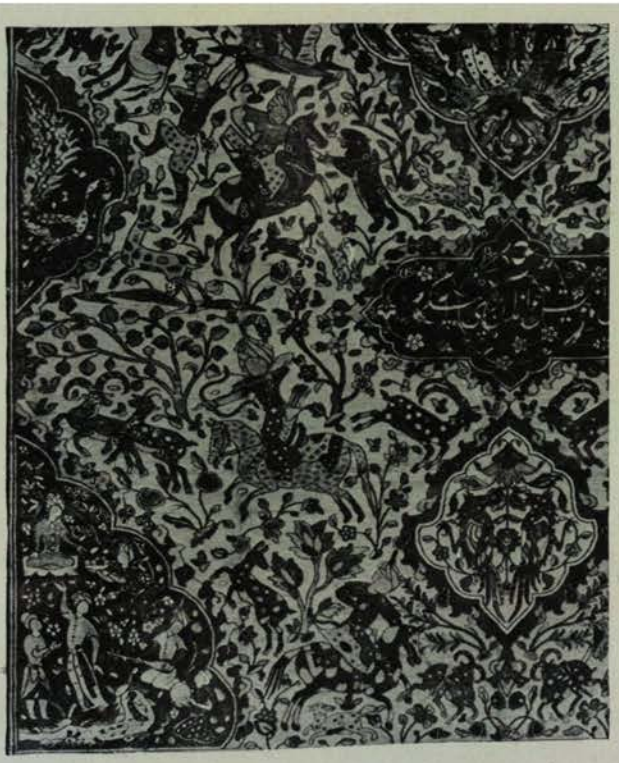
Is this mere enthusiasm? And if not, how is this effect to be explained?

How often have I heard this question, and how often have I asked it of myself in vain!

Only long experience and the most searching study have unveiled the secret and enabled me to see the construction of this "miracle" and to recognize certain lasting truths.

Every harmony, as indeed every stimulus is based upon contrasts, on antagonism and conciliation. The Oriental colouring is founded entirely on these principles. It is built up of the most extreme contrasts and yet it attains a pleasing result by presenting each single colour on a small surface and balanced in such a method, that next to the deepest shadow come the highlights, next to the most powerful tints, the most delicate, so that each weight has its counterweight, each hardness its softness.

Only a sense of colour as sure and exuberant as that of the Asiatic could do this perfectly.



Ill. 32. *Persia, beginning of 17th century.*

Ill. 33. *Persia, 18th century.*

We can note the wonderful preeminence of this sense if we go minutely into all details. Then we see with amazement that the Oriental polychromy, this "crumbling of the colour surface" as Brücke calls it in his "Physiology of Colour", is carried to the utmost limits:

Every single device of the pattern, be it flower, arabesque, etc. is treated in colour as described above and presents a harmonious unity. Through an ever-varying change of colour the weavers succeed in giving every one of these unities a special character. If one of them is attuned to red its neighbour will perhaps be to blue, another one to green, and so on, always differently treated (see Plates IV, V and VI).

On many carpets this variety is carried through to such perfection that no repetition occurs, no matter how often the same device appears in the pattern.

In working out the scheme of the drawing the individual devices are combined and colored according to certain groups, so-called "repeatings." Each of these "repeatings" is again treated according

Parts of three carpets from N. W. Persia.

to the same principle of antithesis and thus also forms an evenly balanced whole.

We are tempted to think that this might suffice, but the Oriental eye ventures still further, namely on a continual variety between the "repeatings" themselves, so that often no two are completely similar.

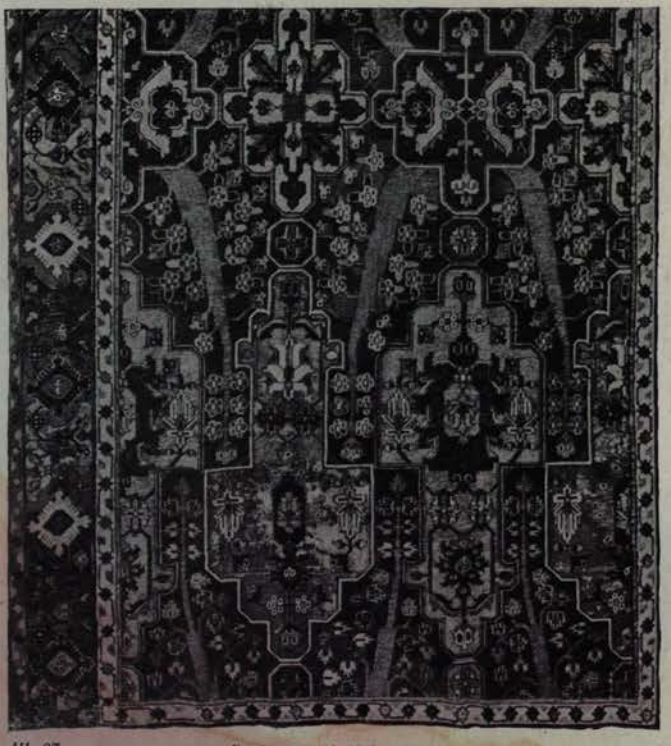
Who would have thought that the peculiar effect of colour of the Oriental rug depends on such a difficult, daring, and complicated method! And yet the "miracle" is not fully explained. Added to these intentional and especially created attractions there are many accidental ones of great importance.

These are the irregularities in the dyeing which are unavoidable when natural colouring matter is applied in the customary primitive manner, and which besides must take place when the washing and bleaching of the wool is as imperfect as in the East. The result of these irregularities is that even the smallest colour unities are not uniform but variagated in hue. This is an indispensable adjunct to the sparkling vivacity of the carpet. The fragment on the opposite page (ill.

Ill. 34. *Persia, 18th century.*

Ill. 35. *Persia, end of 18th century.*

Ill. 36. *Persia, end of 17th century.*



Ill. 37. *Beginning of 18th century.*

coloured 38) shows this very clearly. The dark-blue ground dyed with indigo owes its exquisite charm to the many tints brought out by accident and age, and which range from pure blue to peacock-blue and even yellowish green.

Modern painting, so-called impressionism, attains similar vivid results not by painting with smooth tones but by placing one colour-element next the other and leaving it to our retina to fuse them.

All the results so far described are enhanced by an undertone of the most subtle kind.

The old colours such as madder and indigo, which were used exclusively before the introduction of aniline dyes do not give so simple an image in the spectroscope, whereas the latter do. For instance the blue rays of natural indigo are mixed with almost all the other colours of the spectrum, whereas the aniline dyes show simpler spectra.

Ill. 38. *Fragment from the celebrated carpet in the Victoria and Albert Museum. (See Plate II.)*

This peculiarity of the old natural dyes adds to the conditions already mentioned a further impressionistic quality of the most delicate nature, and at the same time explains why they appear so rich and agreeable to the eye.

Each of these natural colours does not strike only the dominant chord of our optical sense but also the related ones in soft harmony.

After having tried to explain so far the "miraculous" essence of colour in Oriental carpets I can proceed to unveil the last secret.

Beautiful old knotted carpets display the charm of their colours softened and as it were glorified through a vaporous, shimmering veil. Now only is all its wonderful magic complete.

Time and use together in patient labor during long years have woven

Ill. 39. *N.W. Persia, about 1800.*

Ill. 40. *Silk carpet from Kashan, end of 18th century.*

this veil. Originally even the finest of old carpets did not have this captivating appearance. The colours with which the wool fibres were stained, sometimes too much so, gave a too heavy effect and the wool itself had not yet acquired a soft lustre. Only through the continual influence of gentle kneading and scouring process such as the usual custom affords — which is by the way very painstaking in the East — have the superfluous colour particles been removed as well as the coarser and lustreless constituents of the wool, while the fine silky ones remain. The extreme points of the wool fibres on the surface of the plush, have become transparent and almost colourless owing to this process or sometimes to the effect of light. Now, like shimmering delicate lashes they cover the deeperlying tints.

Thus we have the soft, elusive sheen which at the same time modifies and animates, and adds a further element of stimulating vitality.

I must not omit to mention that the preliminary condition for the whole process just described is a good, carefully chosen wool; as indeed, the quality of the fibre is of paramount importance in achieving the effects obtained through dyeing.

Only a very good, fine, and relatively hard wool can acquire the colour-charms extolled above. In earlier times, when the Orientals worked chiefly for their own requirements, the greatest attention could be bestowed on this question. In the productions of to-day it is also essential that every possible sacrifice be made to obtain the right wool when really fine and good carpets are desired. Naturally the large production now carried out in various districts of the East causes the use of poor material which cannot be considered in connection with my remarks above.

If we review what has been said regarding the colour-effects of Oriental knotted carpets we can discover an all-pervading truth.

In contrast to a single-coloured expanse with its

Ill. 41. *E. Persia, about 1800.*

Ill. 42. *W. Persia, end of 18th century.*

Ill. 43. *W. Persia, about 1800.*

Ill. 44. *Persia, about 1800.*

dull stiffness, a many-hued surface radiates life. A life that becomes enriched and yet softened — like the song of the wind in the trees or the splashing of waves — when the colouring is varied and well harmonized, when every harshness is smoothed away and all pretentiousness is avoided. It grows more refined, gains in repose and delicacy, becomes a gentle whisper when the described "impressionistic" influences with their rippling vibrations are added, and seen through its glimmering halo it becomes an exalting decoration.

In all this we find a many-tongued, flickering vivacity which strikes a sympathetic chord, as does the rhythm of the design, only more joy-giving and more direct. At the same time it satisfies a need which the Creator has given us and which is so copiously gratified out-doors in life and colour-abounding nature.

How I have enjoyed writing these sentences, and with newly awakened love I glance at my faithful friend, the old Feraghan carpet lying near me.

What a delightful companion he is. Quietly he has waited till my look of approval rested on him. — That is his way. — Only

Old Carpet from Feraghan N.W. Persia

Herati design.

when he sees that I am attentive he begins to tell me with his coloured smile the stories that artistic intention, accident, and age have endowed him with. His language he adapts to circumstances and to my mood. Sometimes it flows from him with enchanting exuberance, sometimes it sounds like far-off music, rocking my visions in soft arms.

If the sun is shining through the window he will jubilate (though not unless I look at him), and then we often jubilate together. When I am meditating and walking to and fro, my steps easily adapt themselves to the rhythm of his pattern and even my thoughts gain steadiness and repose.

Really my Feraghan you are delightful.

"But there are many other rugs more handsome than I am!"

Yes, of course, but for me you are the only one. Every thing in its place; splendid things to splendour. The daintiest colours to the fair, and the vigorous and ardent to where people sit merrily at their meal. For me you are the best.

How he smiles and is content!

Ill. 45. *W. Persia, about 1800.*

Ill. 46. *N. Persia, beginning of 19th century.*

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Ill. 47. *W. Persia, about 1800.*

Ill. 48. *S.W. Persia, 18th century.*

The Past.

Concluding from what I have said we do not value and love Oriental carpets for imaginary reasons but for their positive charms.

When we cast a look over all the art of the Eastern textile industry from the finest Museum carpet to the homework of modest Nomad women, we are filled with the impression that a whole world of beauty is opened up to us; a world of such high significance and rich variety and yet continuance in itself that we cannot find its like in any other sphere of decorative art. We enjoy it because it is something natural, drawn from the fullness of life and developed into richness, strength, and beauty. Art grown naturally — not a tortured brain product defiant of tradition!

Whenever I have the pleasure in large or small assemblies of showing some good specimens of carpets and bearing witness to their beauty, I feel a kind of priestly exaltation for their magnifi-

cence. At the same time I have the melancholy consciousness that these works of art are among the last, the very last feeble rays emanating from a glorious past, whose splendour once illumined the whole Asiatic world.

For this reason as reminder to the owner, each of these descendants should be labelled to this effect: "Value me for I still possess artistic qualities, which your time cannot produce; take care of me for I am perishable, and belong to the last of my generation."

Merchants have been aware of these facts for years past. The demand was too great, — especially America has bought up at any price. Thus many thousands of old carpets have been taken from their homes, from hut, tent, palace, and mosque, and distributed over the luxury-loving West.

Now the pond is empty and the few precious fish caught in the meshes of the net are expensive. But still one may say that in no other province of the antique art market can good articles whose genuineness is guaranteed by the expert be bought so cheaply as here. Further, one may affirm, in view of the testimony of hundreds and even thousands of amateurs, that there is hardly any object which gives such lasting satisfaction as a beautiful Oriental carpet: "Every day I enjoy it again. And often it is my very sunshine."

Ill. 49. *Book-cover. Herat, about 1450.*

Ill. 50. *Margin from a Persian manuscript. Date 1531.*

The Present.

As was said before, the arts of the East gradually deteriorated for reasons to be found in its own political and economic circumstances. However a real decay extending widely was first ushered in by the disastrous influence of the West. Sad as this fact may seem to the lover of Eastern art it is unfortunately true, and can be observed in every field of hereditary artistic activity where our civilization casts its shadow.

Though I could say much on this subject from personal experience I see that I must refrain from doing so here. The reader will no doubt rejoice with me that not only the deterioration but also the incentive to improvement, to the return, was originated by Europe, the chief customer.

The thing to do was to take the Oriental, as it were, by the hand in a friendly way, and to lead him back to the recently abandoned stage of his own ability; to give him that again which he had lost or forgotten; which however had been preserved in the works produced by his forbears in better times. The innate skill of Oriental men and women, and their industry and frugality were, as formerly, still there. Also their old technical adroitness was everywhere in practice. Soon even very able Persian draughtsmen were found who showed us anew the admirable artistic talent of the race.

On the other hand there was an increasing demand in the West for the productions of the East. Thus none of the most important conditions were wanting which could bring about a new florescence of the old art and so the circumstances are at present in development. Not every where, of course, but in the most important districts of Asia Minor and Persia.

Again many fine and beautiful carpets, some even magnificent, are woven

Carpet from Lesghistan

S. Caucasus, 19th cent.

Ill. 51. *Border of a Persian carpet, about 1700.*

in the East and bought by the modern world in search of beauty. The export rises every year; a blessing for those nations, who are so poor in economic resources. The paralysing wind which blew over the newly awakened life brought dangers but fortunately did no harm. It originated in a phase of western taste which could not do enough in the dilution of colour and in the absence of form.

In conclusion the kind reader may allow me to say a few words regarding this movement.

The desire of mankind for variety has always brought about movements which have left the realms of a beauty achieved under favourable conditions, and sometimes led to exaggerated conceptions of baroque, sometimes to severity and dryness, even — as in recent times — to an absolute negation.

Of course it cannot be the task of the decorative arts to deny us that which delights eye and heart. They should rather strew the often dreary and sombre path of our existence with the animating flow of their forms and the sunshine of their colours, and also serve its great and lofty purposes with all the wealth of their means.

So sure as moderation is a sign of matured taste, so surely the direction that leads to emptiness and sterility is a wrong one.

Refined moderation, yes — but not insignificance! Measured life, yes — but not paralysis! This ought to be the password of every rational art movement even to-day. But how was it, and how is it still to a great extent with modern art?

The fairy of tradition, so rich and generous, stands apart, sorrowing; she is suspected, avoided, as if the contents of her horn of plenty were poison: — "No, no, we do not want you and your gifts! We desire every thing empty and plain for we love silence; white and grey, for we like to be chilly; greyish-brown and brownish-grey, for our eyes are colour-shy. At least there are "connoisseurs" whom we must listen to, and who have proved to us that the modern being cannot endure either colour or form".

Ill. 52. *N. W. Persia, second half of 18th century.*

Since a short time, however, is there not a group of the very newest leaders in the world of art who with the same success preach the exact opposite to the same modern people?

"Colours, glowing colours! Not empty flatness! — Depths, basses, with their massive, satisfying power, not mere whimpering treble!" This is the war-cry of these "daring hotspurs" and what they bring is colour full of joyous life and strength. Who is right?

For the Oriental carpets there is no doubt about that. Smilingly they start upon their new calling, for, no, they will not be robbed of life. They will not resign their bright colours to please the others. Cheerfully and eagerly they are prepared to give us that which after all we cannot do without: Rhythmical life in drawing and colour.

Stuttgart, Schillerstrasse.

Carl Hopf.

Sumak

Woven carpet from S. Caucasus.

Notes on the Illustrations

Titlepage. Almond-shaped medallion often found in Persian carpets. Pure Arabesque ornament in old style. Part of a book-cover. Herat. Dat 1435.

Page 3, ill. 1. Border of carpet in ill. 11, p. 11.

Page 4, ill. 2. Margin of old Persian M. S. From Masterp. of Moh. Art, Munich 1911. Date 1435. Owned by Dr. Martin, Stockholm.

Page 5, ill. 3. Faïence frieze. Acc. to Sarre: Buchara about 1400. Masterp. of Moh. Art, Munich 1911. Owned by Museum for Art and Industry, Hamburg.

Page 6, ill. 4. Part of book-cover in possession of Baron M. v. Oppenheim, Berlin. Acc. to Martin: Egyptian 14—15th cent.

Page 7, ill. 5. Border of so-called Viennese Hunting Carpet, 16th cent. Larger coloured ill. of this carpet on Plate III.

Page 8, ill. 6. Portrait of a Persian. Masterp. of Moh. Art. Munich 1911. Acc. to Martin: Herat before 1506. Owned by Dr. Martin, Stockholm.

Page 8, ill. 7. Portrait of a Persian lady, presumably end of 15th cent. Masterp. Moh. Art. Munich 1911. Own.: Ducoté, Paris.

Page 9, ill. 8. Section of splendid, wonderfully drawn carpet worked with unsurpassed fineness in silk. Museum Poldi-Pezzoli, Milan. Persia, presumably Kashan, 16th cent.

Page 9, ill. 9. Persia, 16th cent. Section of a book-cover. Owned by Ottom. Museum, Constantinople.

Page 10, ill. 10. Margin from wonderful old Persian M. S., Nisami, now in British Museum, London. Date 1531.

Page 11, ill. 11. Section of centre piece of one of most beautiful known carpets. Presumably Kashan, Persia, 16th cent. Owned by Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Section of border to this carpon op. 3, ill. 1.

Page 12, ill. 12. Woolen carpet from Persia. End of 16th cent. Now in Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin. Large coloured ill. in Vienna Book, 1892.

Page 13, ill. 13. Silk Pers. carpet, presumably woven in Kashan, Persia, 16th cent. Now in Stieglitz Museum, St. Petersburg. Large col. ill. in the Vienna Book, 1892.

Page 13, ill. 14. Part of woolen carpet, presumably W. Persia about 1600. Owned by Count Carl Boucquoi, Vienna. Large coloured ill. in Vienna Book, 1892.

Page 14, ill. 15. Silk carp, presum. Kashan, Persia 16th cent. Richest drawing and finest work. Owned by Prince Czartoryski-Museum, Cracow.

Page 15, ill. 16. Woolen carpet Persia 16th cent. Acc. to Martin formerly in Bardini coll. Florence.

Page 16, ill. 17. Silk carpet from the beginning of the 17th cent. Masterp. of Moh. Art, Munich 1911. Owned by Dr. Alb. Figdor, Vienna.

Page 16, ill. 18. Woolen carpet, presumably E. Persia, 17th cent. Owned by Countess Clam-Gallas, Vienna. Large col. ill. in Vienna Book 1892.

Page 17, ill. 19. Margin of Persian M. S., Nisami, date 1531. Owned by Brit. Museum, London.

Page 18, ill. 20. Section of design from woolen carpet Feraghan, W. Persia abt. 1800. Larger col. ill. Plate VI. Owned by the author.

Page 19, ill. 21. Woolen carpet Persia, presumably 17th Cent. Owned by Imp. Austrian Commercial Museum, Vienna.

Page 19, ill. 22. Woolen carpet Persia, presumably 18th cent.

Page 20, ill. 23. Woolen carpet, presumably Gherus, N.W. Persia. End of 18th cent. Owned by the author.

Page 20, ill. 24. Woolen carpet from Gilan, N.W. Persia, end of 18th cent. Owned by author.

Page 20, ill. 25. Woolen carpet woven by Schahsewens in N.W. Persia, 1796. Carpet is dated. 1795. Owned by the author.

Page 20, ill. 26. Woolen carpet from Giendsche, S. Caucasus, abt. 1800. Owned by the author.

Page 20, ill. 27. Woolen carpet S. Caucasus. Beginning of 19th cent. Owned by the author.

Page 21, ill. 28. Woolen carpet presumably Kashan, Persia, 16th cent. Owned by Prince Schwarzenberg, Vienna. Larger col. ill. Vienna Book 1892.

Page 21, ill. 29. Woolen carpet W. Persia, presumably end of 18th cent. Owned by Kaffaroff, Constantinople.

Page 22, ill. 30. Margin from a Persian M. S., Nisami, Date 1531. British Museum, London.

Page 24, ill. 32. Woolen carpet Persia, presumably beginning of 17th cent. Masterp. of Moh. Art, Munich 1911.

Page 24, ill. 33. Woolen carpet N.W. Persia, 18th cent. Masterp. of Moh. Art, Munich 1911. Owned by Kuschaki frères, Paris.

Page 25, ill. 34. Woolen carpet N.W. Persia, 18th cent. Masterp. of Moh. Art, Munich 1911. Owned by H. Woworsky, Berlin.

Page 25, ill. 35. Woolen carpet from Heris, N.W. Persia, end of 18th cent. Owned by the author.

Page 26, ill. 36. Woolen carpet presumably from Isfahan, Persia, end of 17th cent. Owned by L. Bernheimer, Munich.

Page 26, ill. 37. Woolen carpet presumably from N.W. Persia or Mesopotamia, 17—18th cent. Masterp. of Moh. Art, Munich 1911. Owned by Carl Lamm, Näsby, Sweden.

Page 28, ill. 39. Rich Cover from Rescht, N.W. Persia about 1800. Cloth mosaic, embroidered. Owned by the author.

Page 28, ill. 40. Part of silk carpet from Kashan, Persia. Second half of 18th cent. Part of border of this carpet on p. 36, ill. 51. Owned by the author.

Page 29, ill. 41. Part of centre of woolen carpet from Khorassan, E. Persia, about 1800. Owned by the author.

Page 29, ill. 42. Woolen carpet from Dschoschegan, W. Persia, end of 18th cent. formerly in possession of author.

Page 30, ill. 43. Woolen carpet from W. Persia, about 1800. Owned by the author.

Page 30, ill. 44. Woolen carpet from Herat, about 1800. Owned by the author.

Page 31, ill. 45. Woolen carpet from Dschoschegan, W. Persia, about 1800. Owned by the author.

Page 31, ill. 46. Woolen carpet from the Karabagh, S. Caucasus, beginning of the 19th cent. Owned by the author.

Page 32, ill. 47. Woolen carpet from Senneh, W. Persia, about 1800. Owned by the author.

Page 32, ill. 48. Woolen carpet S.W. Persia, 18th cent. Imp. Museum, Constantinople. Larger ill. in Masterp. Moh. Art., Munich 1911.

Page 33, ill. 49. Book-cover with abstract ornamentation in old Persian style from Masterp. Moh. Art, Munich 1911. Acc. to Martin: presumably Herat about 1450. A relationship between this ornament and that in the border of the carpet on p. 12 is probable.

Page 34, ill. 50. Margin from Persian M. S., Nisami, date 1531. Brit. Museum, London.

Page 35, ill. 51. Border of a Persian carpet, about 1700.

Page 36, ill. 52. Part of border of the silk carpet on p. 28, ill. 40, second half of 18th cent.

Description of the Coloured Plates

Plate I. Old Chinese or Tibetian brocade. Silk and gold on black back-ground. Seventeen different colours. Owned by the author.

Plate II. Woolen carpet from Ardebil, N.W. Persia. Date 1539. This so-called holy carpet probably woven in Kashan, Persia, is the largest Persian carpet which has descended to us. Its size is 12 yrds. 22 in. x 5 yrds. 28 in. About 15 years ago one of my business friends sold it to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, for £ 2500.—. Its value to-day is almost incalculable. It is now the centre of attraction in the Oriental section of this Museum. When this carpet was repaired a few scraps were cut off. One of these was purchased by me and is shown in colour on page 27 No. 38. The actual size of this exquisite fragment is: 9 x 10 in. Owned by the author.

Plate III. Part of the celebrated so-called silk, Hunting Carpet, in possession of the Imperial Court of Vienna. 16th cent. Admirable, superfine workmanship.

Plate IV. The upper ill. represents a Kashkai carpet from S.W. Persia, the lower a Daghestan from the Caucasus. Both show very clearly an almost endless variety of colour and design. Owned by the author.

Plate V. Parts of three carpets from N.W. Persia in possession of the Author. Good examples of Persian polychromy.

Plate VI. Carpet from Prov. Feraghan, N.W. Persia. Particularly fine specimen of this origin with the "Herati design". Owned by the author, end of 18 th cent.

Plate VII. Carpet from Lesghistan, Caucasus. Contrasting polychromy of delightful freshness. Remarkable for the ingenious way in which the white back-ground of the centre-piece is brought into balance, as much as possible, with the five large rosettes, these would seem intolerably hard and heavy were it not for a generous strewing of geometrically conventional flowers and childishly drawn figures of animals. Owned by the author.

Plate VIII. Woven carpet from S. Caucasus, a so-called Sumak. The predominating geometrical design shows Persian flower patterns in their most degenerate stage. The intelligent balancing of colour values is plainly visible. The five yellow octagons, for instance, with their obtrusive sulphur yellow are weighted with heavy colours, whereas the five dull blue octagons with their quiet tones show light colours. An example of the good sense of colour in the Circassian shepherdesses who wove this carpet. In the possession of Dr. Kees Stuttgart.

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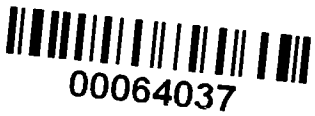

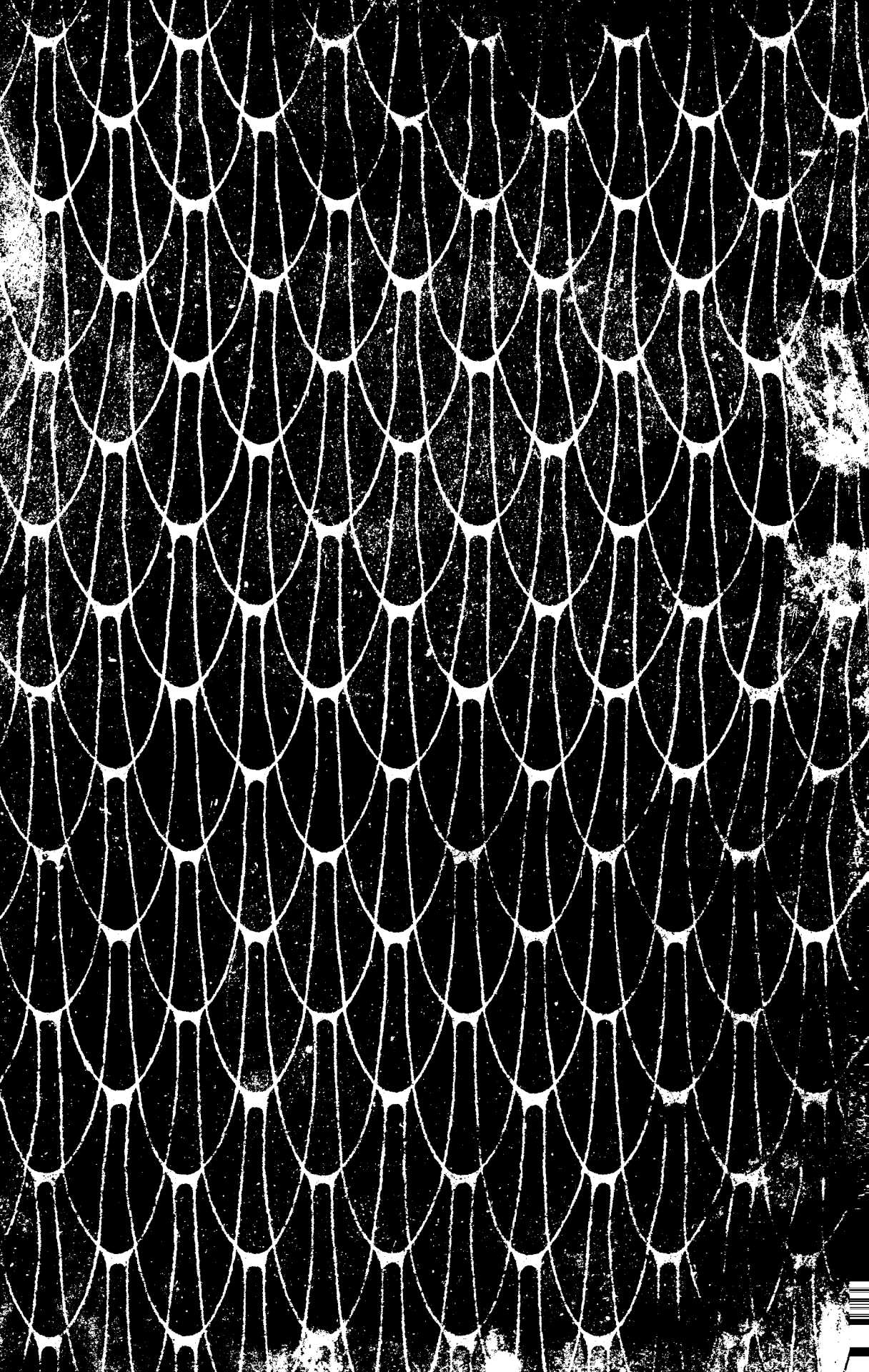

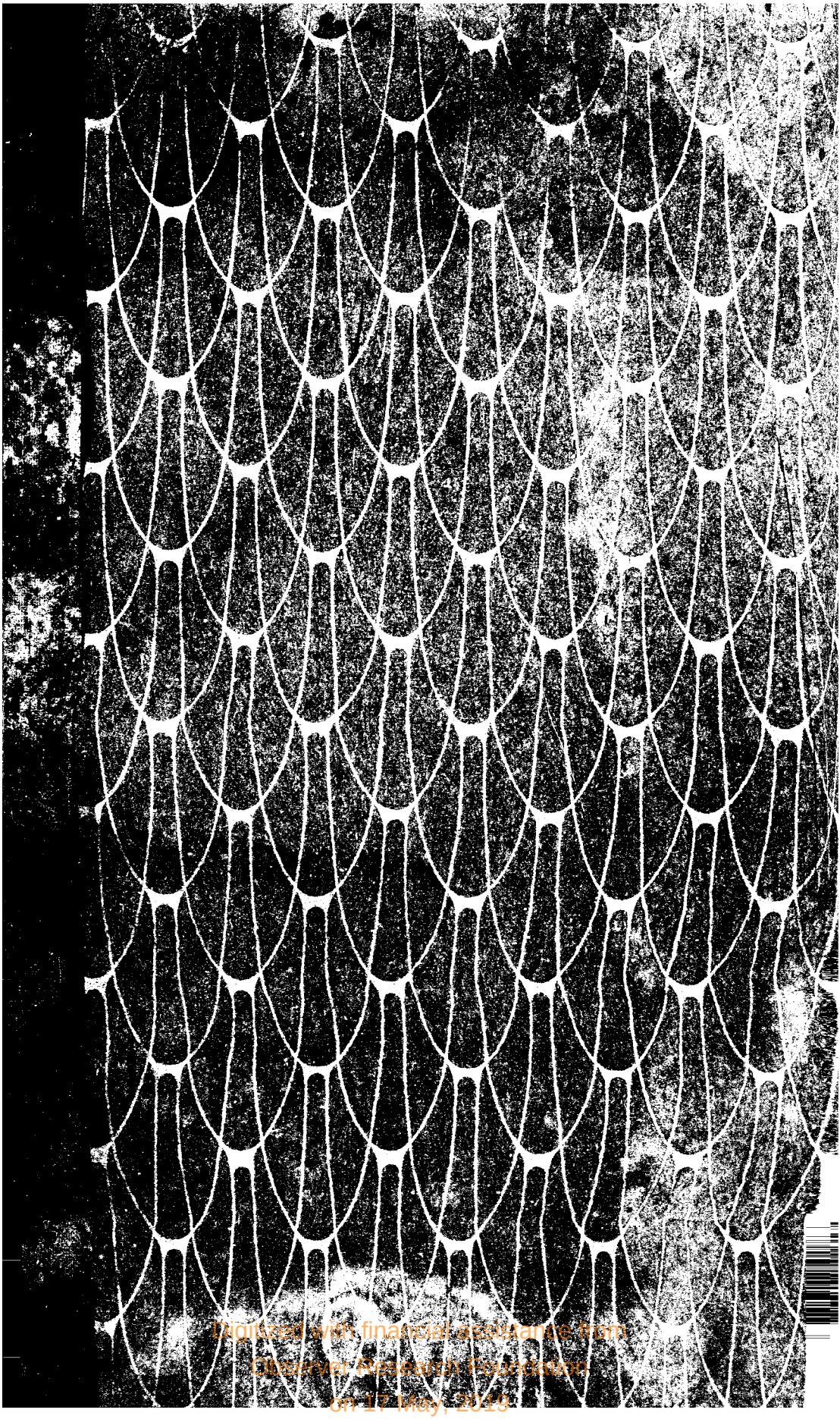

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